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ST. MICHAEL'S CHIME
AND OTHER VERSES



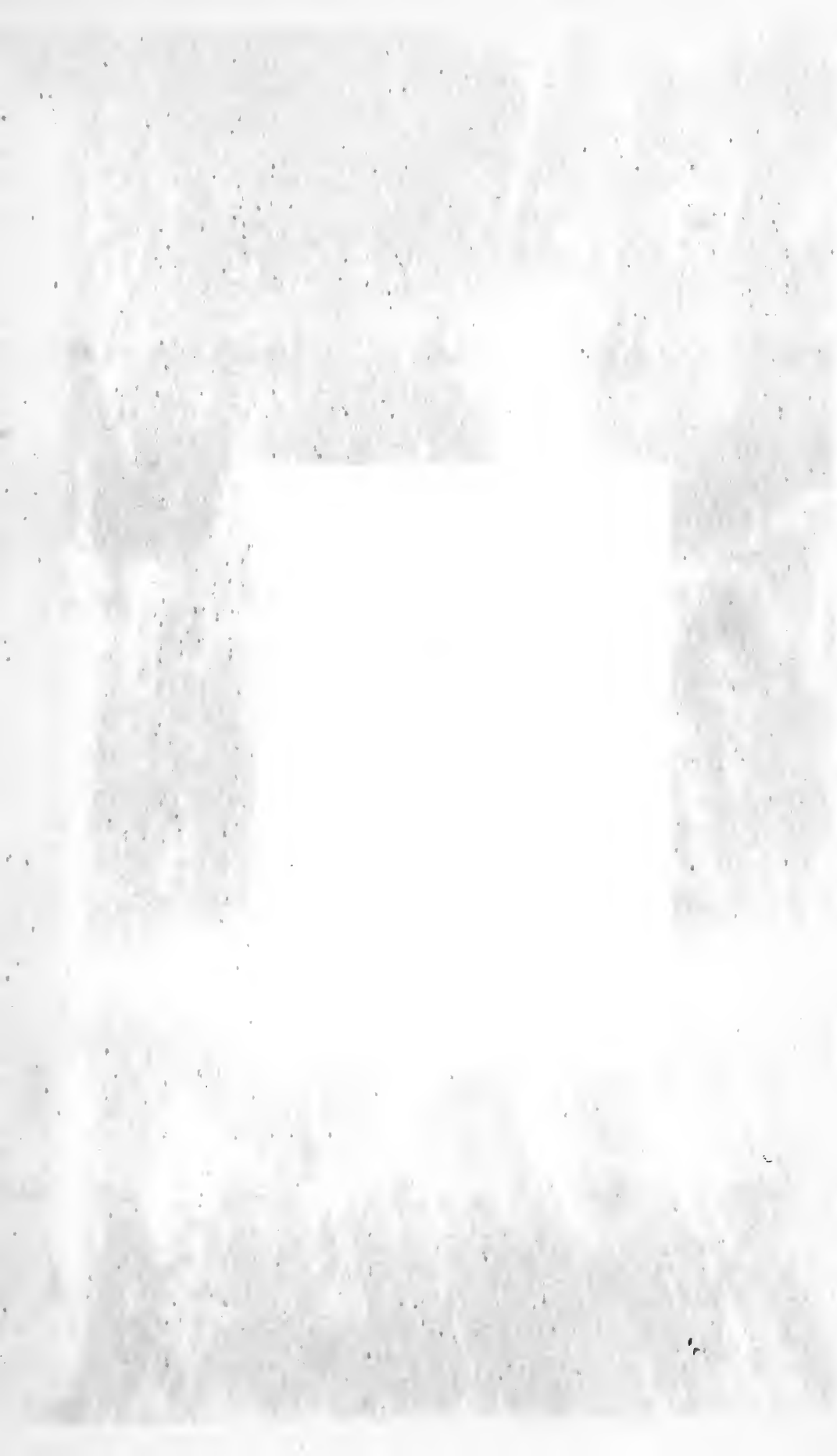


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**ST. MICHAEL'S CHIME
AND OTHER VERSES**



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BY

HELEN TRENHOLM DICKINSON

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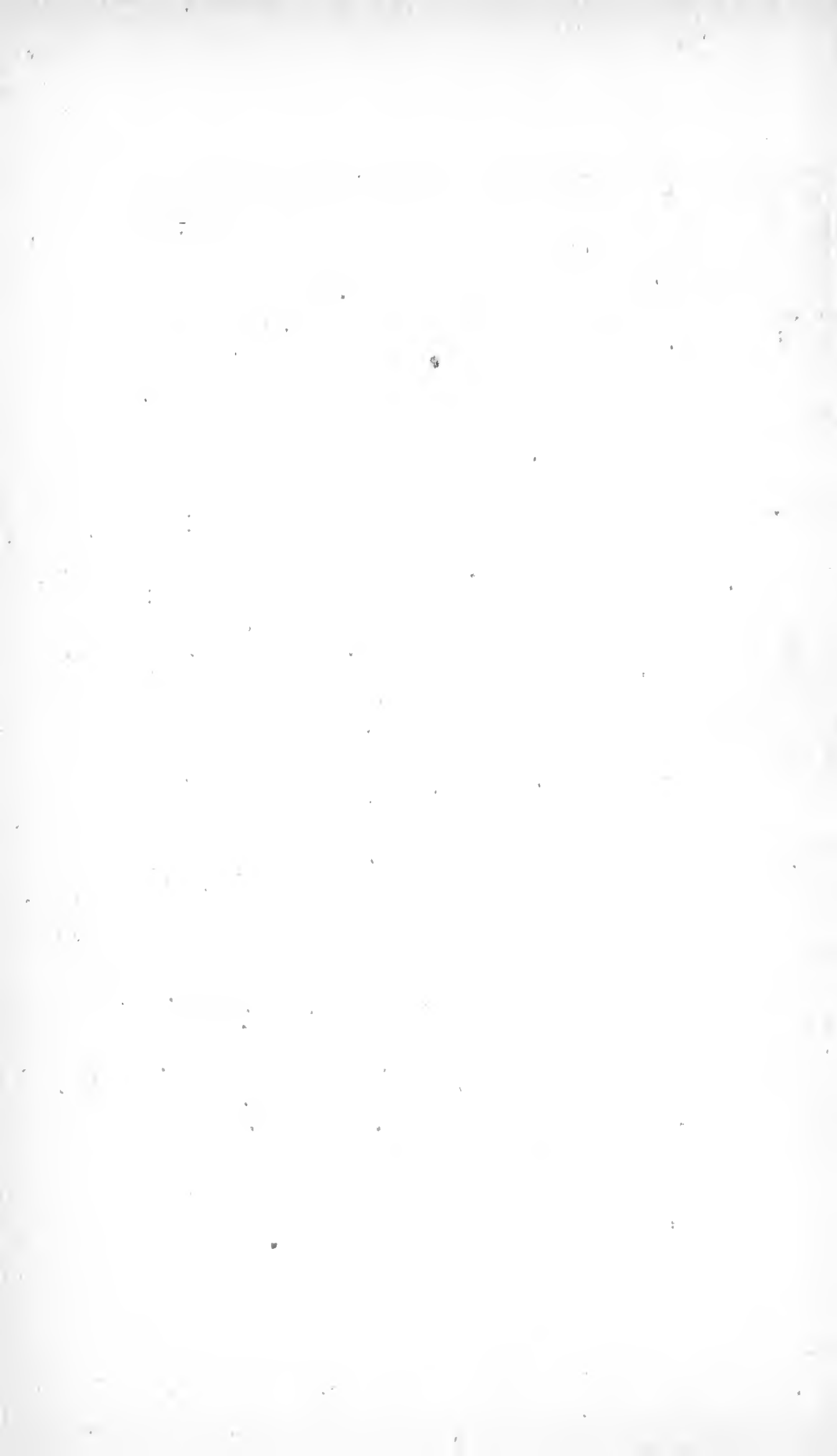
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To M. O. D.
my most appreciative reader
Helen Trenholm Dickinson





ST. MICHAEL'S CHIME

AND OTHER VERSES

ST. MICHAEL'S CHIME



unday—a morn in spring, when
Charleston's streets
Are flooded by the sunshine spring-
time gives,

When roses scatter lavishly their sweets
And reawakened nature laughs and lives,
When lilies on their stems luxuriant sway,
And violets breathe their souls out all the day.

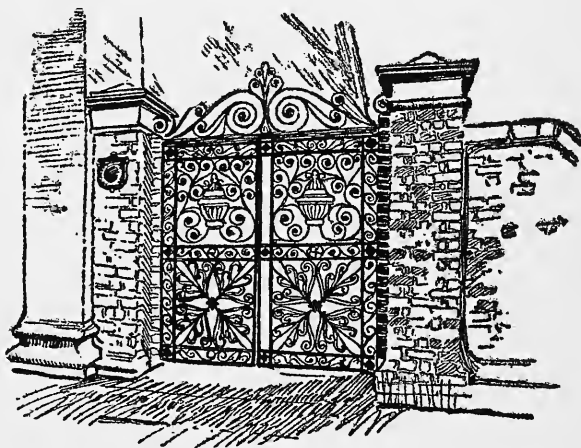
From deep-sea gardens drifts a gentle breeze,
Full-freighted with the fragrance of the main,
That whispers 'round the freshly budded trees,
And, veering, flutters oceanward again;
As aimless as the butterfly that goes
In dreamy dalliance from rose to rose.

In old St. Michael's yard the graves, grassgrown,
Are clothed with vernal freshness every year,
And blossoms ope against the mossy stone,
Where mouldering inscriptions scarce appear
Recording virtues of the one who lies
Beneath its weight with dust upon his eyes.

'Tis very quiet in this churchyard's shade!
Methinks the Spirit of the Deathless Past
One holy wing across the gate hath laid,
Barring the Present that the peace might last—
The peace of fragrant, unforgotten years,
When these same graves were wet with new-wrung
tears.

And, while I muse upon the stillness, break
Harmonies sweetly restful to the soul,
That echo evermore: "Awake! Awake!

All ye that sleep
in darkness!"
Roll on roll,
As outward floats
with melody
sublime
The benediction of
St. Michael's
chime!



THE SEA-WALL

YOUTH

A long sea-wall, where waves beat restlessly,
 A dreaming bay,
Where sunbeams gild the ripples carelessly
 All through the summer day—
Yet I and thou discern dark shades that fall
Beside the long sea-wall.

MANHOOD

A storm-tossed sea, waves high and turbulent;
 A heavy blast
That rips the sheet of many a fisher's barque,
 That snaps the slender mast;
Whilst thou and I note how a misty pall
Hangs o'er the old sea-wall.

AGE

Winter, with skies that lower hopelessly
 Above the tide;
I shiver as the rain falls icily
 And mutely seek thy side;
And we can scarcely see, for tears that fall,
That waves have overleapt the long sea-wall.

A DAY

A boat was rocking in the bay—
Before the noon it sailed away.

Laughed a child by the ocean tide—
Ere night came down the child had died.

And still the waves are surging free,
And still the sunlight floods the sea.

The boat hath reached another bay,
The child has seen the Perfect Day.

WHERE WAVES WHISPER

Along the sands elusive shadows lie,
While wingèd clouds sweep o'er a dreamy sky.
And one could think that mermaids in their glee
Had strewn with pearls their pathway o'er the sea,
As with their harps they drifted one by one
Into the palace of the setting sun.

CRYSTALS

The stone was rugged, brown and scarred by time;
Not beautiful to look on, lying there;
Yet when 'twas broken by the miner's axe,
Lo! what a miracle the blow laid bare.

Within that ugly shell behold—a mass
Of purest crystal
Sparkles in the light,
And quivers all aglow with lucid tints,
With opalescent hues—a wondrous sight!

So have I seen a soul pent in a form,
Unlovely, graceless, yet, behind the wall
Of flesh, was hid the spirit burning pure,
Which, when its prison-house to wreck, shall fall,

Struck by the miner—Death—what beauty then
Shall be disclosed! What a glorious sight,
To see the soul emerge from homely clay,
Fair as a crystal, clothed with burning light.

THE EVENING STAR

When the day dies beyond the purple mountain,
And with her life blood stains the west afar,
High 'mid the gushing of that vermeil fountain
Leaps into life the glorious evening star.

Whence hath it birth and whither doth it travel,
Down the red pathway leading from our sight,
As on its way it seemeth to unravel
Fringes of stars to deck the sovereign night?

Throbbing with wondrous radiance supernal,
Thrilling with mystic meaning are its beams,
Rousing the spirit as the showers vernal
Wake the wind flower by deep forest streams.

Is it a lantern held by angel fingers?
Angels who walk the silent ages thro',
Waiting the while time indolently lingers
Patient forever 'mid high heaven's blue;

Waiting till evening star shall not be needed
Ere they release the beacon held so long;
Till moon and stars shall shine—by men unheeded,
Men drunk with fighting, deaf with battle song?

Or, is the evening star a jewel shining
Far on the altar stairs that lead to God,
Gem that was found with never toil or mining,
By seraph hosts with holy sandals shod?

Who knoweth? None—Shine on, O star, and
guide us,

As ever when the world turns to her rest;
Upward we lift our eyes whate'er betide us,
Hungry for thee that shineth in the west.

O, work of God, if gem or angel fire,
Shine on us alway from the twilight sky,
Until at last of life and strife we tire,
Then beam thou over where we sleeping lie.

SONG OF NIGHT

Hast e'er seen the night descending
On the mountain tops afar,
Twilight into blackness blending,
Broken by a flashing star;
While the crescent slips away,
Showing where the foolish day,
Trembling, fled from Night advancing,
Down behind the mountains dancing,
Where the dead days are?

Hast thou seen Night's jewels shining
On her shield of purple-blue?
Gold and silver is the lining,
With vermilion streaks shot through
For the Spirits of the North
Painted it and hung it forth
Ere time had a fair beginning,
Or the wheel of Fate 'gan spinning
What it spins for me and you.

Hast beheld her girdle gleaming
As above thou turn'st thine eyes,
With its million star points beaming,
Flung across the silent skies—
Woven long, ah, long ago,
Ere the ice had birth—or snow,

Held in place by God's own finger,
Where it seems to droop and linger
O'er the heavens dropp'd bow-wise?

Watching through the midnight hours,
Hast thou seen Night's planets pale,
As starlike arbutus flowers
Languish in the wooded vale,
Till the Morning Star awakes,
Songs of Dawn the silence breaks,
And the peaceful, sapphire mountains
Loose the tongues of all their fountains,
Thrust their misty veils away
To greet the new-born Day?

GOD'S ROSE GARDEN

When day declineth, in the misty West
Shineth a rosy light above the hills,
Faintly, increasing; till behold! at length
It's glory all the purple valley fills;
'Tis but the pale, reflected light on high
Of God's Rose Garden far beyond the sky.

Of God's Rose Garden where exultingly
The Spirit-children 'mid His roses play,
Singing their songs in lisping accents sweet
Throughout Eternity's mysterious day:
Each child borne far beyond frail human love
Plays in the Garden of the Lord above.

NIGHT

Night and a pale moon sailing
Behind the poplar trees;
Long silver moonbeams trailing
Across the lonely leas;
Night, with a thousand blossoms
Asleep beneath the moon,
Where zephyrs dropp'd from heaven
Their lullabies soft croon.

LOVE

Breath of a flower—Heaven-born,
Light of the rosy Eden morn;
Song that a Seraph sang when Earth
Fresh from the hand of God had birth.

THE MOON-QUEEN

Hast seen the misty Moon-Queen sailing
In crescent barge when sunset's paling
 With poppies on her brow,
And pale moon-flowers languid lying,
Mix'd with vale-lilies sweetly dying,
 Wound round the barge's prow?

Her hair the starlight interlaces,
And 'mid the azure, starry spaces
 She reigneth all supreme,
Her diadem's live jewels glimmer,
And o'er her shoulders cast their shimmer,
 And throb and glow and gleam.

Deep, deep her eyes, as midnight dreaming,
Anon with meteor glances gleaming,
 And from the Moon-Queen's lips
A song of love and mystery,
Unknown to human history,
 In undulations slips;
With fairy melody empearled,
Down to the dreaming world.

NOX

Across the hills a dusky army moves,
The troops of night;
Their shadow plumes are fluttered by the breeze;
They silent stir beneath the forest trees;
With footsteps light.

And as they come slow marching thro' the vales,
The blackness creeps
Athwart the Earth. Then with her flags unfurled
Night keepeth watch over the weary world,
And mankind sleeps.

TO AN ORIOLE

Trustingly thou buildest on a limb
Heavy with white blossoms honey-tipped;
Where, when Nature sang her matin hymn,
Eager bees the dewy nectar sipped;
Where all day emblazoned butterflies
Spread their wings 'gainst Spring's translucent
skies.

Ne'er a thought of care o'ershadowing thee,
Thou thy nest dost deftly fasten where
It shall quiver whene'er sways the tree,
Tremble with each shifting breath of air;
Like a thing affrighted greatly quake
When at night the thunderous storm-clouds
break.

Yet thou buildest, all day heeding naught
Save the whiteness of the locust bloom,
Save the hangings of strange weavings wrought,
Decorating thy suspended room;
Working confidently all the while
In the sunshine seeing God's own smile.

FLOWERS

In the forest, 'mid deserted marshes,
Oft we discover flow'rets frail and fair,
Rooted in slime and ooze they lift pure faces
Breathing a benediction on the air. . . .

So in the city, 'mid vile slums and squalor,
Find we a child with smiling, angel face
Living with crime, yet in its innocence
Hallowing e'en the darkest, foulest place.

THE LILY OF HEART'S DESIRE

Far in the garden of Hesperides

A lily lifts its crimson cup in air,
And reigns the royal queen of all the blooms
That wave their opalescent petals there.

A flower with the very hue of blood,
Flame-streaked—seeming moulded from fierce
fire,
Drenched by a flood of tears—sad passion's tears,
'Tis called the Lily of the Heart's Desire.

Men see it in their dreams and vainly strive
To clasp the bloom, but fingers ne'er shall hold
That magic lily with its burning rim
And throbbing stamens dusted o'er with gold.

For who may find the garden? What swift barque
Shall cleave the virgin tide of unknown seas—
And in the flush of dawn sight suddenly
The mystic island of Hesperides?

Where palms stand blue against a cloudless sky;
Where singing sirens strike the silvern lyre,
Where drunken with its own exquisiteness
Glow the rich Lily of the Heart's Desire.

MIGNONETTE

I sing of Mignonette—
And straight before mine eyes
I see once more the garden old,
Its winding paths, its wayward hedge of box,
Its beds of mignonette and marigold.

I sing of Mignonette—
Once more I do behold
The quiet parlor dark and still,
The air full-weighted with fresh mignonette
And Phoebe dreaming on the window-sill.

I sing of Mignonette—
I hear again the sound
Of wedding bells upon a day
In early Spring when music filled the air,
When all the country—all the world—was gay.

I sing of Mignonette—
And catch the murmured tone
Of rain-drops falling soft like tears
Shed for the memory of withered hopes,
Of joys that vanished with forgotten years.

I sing of Mignonette—
Upon a lowly mound
Where moaning winds float slowly by;
I sing of Mignonette—yet now my song
Hath sore become one sad and broken sigh.

SONG OF JUNE

I know a meadow where the wild lark sings,
Where daisies nod and beckon all the day,
Where butterflies spread wide their irised wings,
And dancing o'er the blossoms seem to say:

Live as we do
The summer through,
Banishing care and sadness,
For the World's atune
To the song of June,
And mad for very gladness!

AUGUST

Queenly August silver-shod,
Asters wild and goldenrod
 In her hand,
Sweeps from o'er the dreaming hills
Past the silver, singing rills
 Through the land.

Breathing perfume everywhere,
Incense-like upon the air,
 Doth she come
Where the Summer's tardy rose
In neglected garden grows:
 Where bees hum.

Where a crescent, ghostly pale,
Shines when darkness holds the vale,
 Where nights long
Mocking birds entrancingly
Fill the spot with melody
 Of their song.

AN AUTUMN DAY

Red flame the maples by the water edge,
Dyeing the ripples of the sluggish stream,
And goldenrod with largess fills the land,
Which smiles all day as in a happy dream.

The purple mountains kiss white clouds that leap
Along their bastions lifted calmly high;
And over all the mid-day moon is hung
A severed pearl, amid a milky sky.

ECHO

Why dwellest thou in the purple hills
Alone, Echo?
For where the sun scarce penetrates
Thou'rt wont to go,
In still, deserted caverns where the gloom
Gives thee scant room—
Why dwell'st alone, Echo?

I love the purple hills, the caves,
The deep-grove aisles,
There grow Narcissus blossoms in
The dark defiles;
There may I dream till stars grow old above
Of my lost love—
So dwell I ever lone.

WHITE HYACINTH

Caressed by wandering winds,
Sun-kissed, dew-drenched,
This blossom springeth from the vernal sod:
All fragrant in its spotless chastity;
A thought of God.

WILD SWANS

I saw them rise, six swans as white as pearls,
From where the cypress trees stand grimly dark,
Where moss hangs heavy o'er a magic pool
Unruffled by the wary hunter's barque,
Where pure pond lilies, with great hearts of gold,
Their shining petals silently unfold.

Six swans, whose pinions caught the amber glow
Of sunlight sifting through dense forest trees,
Six swans whose plumes were softly ruffled by
A wayward, undulating river breeze,
That sprang, like Venus, in a sweet unrest
From foam that curl'd upon a wavelet's crest.

For what far port the snowy birds were bound
Is yet unknown, and mounting in the blue
They circled ever higher, till at last,
'Mid rolling clouds they disappeared from view,
Mayhap to join the swans that fly, they say,
Forever onward through the Milky Way.

For once six hunters, in a bygone day,
In this same magic cypress pool were drowned,
And ghostly swans their spirits bore away
To where all worthy ones are golden-crowned,
Beyond those skies where great Orion stands
With starry weapons in his shining hands.

AT SEA

Sunset of gold and rose
Fading to dun,
Wind from the shore that blows
After the sun.

Songs from the sailor lad,
Laughter; a call—
Minors that echo sad,
Darkness o'er all.

FRAGMENT

Water and shore of silver
Sunset and crescent's bow,
Stars shining in God's heaven
Upon the rosy glow:
Love in the world and laughter,
Tears in the world and gall—
And—thro' enduring ages
God's mercy over all!

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